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E.O. 12958: DECL: TWENTY YEARS
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: GOE REQUESTS TIMELINE ON MANTA FOL

REF: A. 08 QUITO 1184
[1](#)B. 08 QUITO 723
[1](#)C. 08 QUITO 694

Classified By: Ambassador Heather M. Hodges for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Embassy and GOE officials met January 14 to discuss planning for the USG's withdrawal from the Manta Forward Operating Location (FOL). The GOE representatives were cordial and expressed an interest in joint coordination of the turnover of the FOL. The GOE noted that the Ecuadorian Air Force (FAE) did not have the budget for the equipment currently at the FOL that it may need to replace, and stressed the need for the USG's withdrawal timeline as soon as possible to assist in planning. USG representatives at the meeting outlined the USG's monthly and yearly operational costs. Embassy requests Washington authorization to present latest planned dates for cessation of flight and firefighting operations and departure of the USG from the FOL. Embassy emphasizes that earliest possible coordination of timeline information is in the USG's interest. See action request in para. 6. (End Summary.)

[1](#)2. (SBU) At the GOE's request (Ref A), officials from the DAO, Military Group, Manta Forward Operating Location (FOL) and Political Section met with GOE officials on January 14 to discuss a timeline for the USG's withdrawal from the FOL and eventual disposition of FOL assets. Representatives from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the incoming and outgoing commanders of the Ecuadorian Air Force (FAE) Base at Manta attended on behalf of the GOE.

[1](#)3. (C) The GOE expressed concern over the turnover process and an interest in what functions they would need to assume and what items might require repair. The Ecuadorian participants made the following requests:
-- To be informed as soon as possible of the USG's timeline in order to obtain necessary funding, noting that the FAE has not been budgeted for the equipment that it will need to replace, nor for functions currently carried out by the FOL.
-- The FOL's plans for all structures and communications networks.
-- To be advised whether the USG would leave the existing cameras.

-- Training on use of any remaining infrastructure equipment that may warrant such training.
-- Access to view certain warehouses to select a location for the future installation of a flight simulator. (Note: The FAE intends to locate its Super Tucano fleet at the Manta Air Base. End Note.)
-- Information regarding the community relations outreach activities performed by FOL members, with the hope of continuing some of these activities.

¶4. (C) Embassy officials explained that the USG would withdraw from the FOL by November 2009 and turn over the FOL's installations as per the terms of the FOL agreement, but that we were still coordinating with Washington a timeline for withdrawal and ultimate disposition of all assets. We detailed verbally and passed documentation outlining the monthly and yearly facility and utility expenses currently paid by the USG that the FAE may have to assume. We noted that the existing fire trucks would not stay, but that the USG could entertain a request to purchase fire trucks to replace them. We also informed the GOE that the USG had rules and procedures for military facility turnovers that were being considered in Washington. These could include lateral transfers of U.S. equipment to other U.S. counternarcotics facilities. We agreed that we would notify the GOE as soon as we have information regarding a withdrawal timeline and disposition of equipment, at which time we would call for a follow-on joint coordination meeting.

Comment and Action Request

¶5. (C) Atmospherics of the meeting were highly positive, and the GOE officials appeared genuinely interested in coordinating a transfer of the FOL. The GOE officials frequently stressed the importance of receiving a USG withdrawal timeline with sufficient time to allow the GOE to budget, plan and assign resources to the airport in Manta. The GOE's interest in effective coordination is different from the undiplomatic manner in which it notified the Embassy in July 2008 of its intention to terminate the agreement (Ref B and C).

¶6. (C) The Embassy requests authorization to release dates for termination of flight and firefighting operations (July 30) and ultimate handover of FOL facilities (September 30), without further delay. The Embassy also requests guidance on the GOE's request for plans as outlined in paragraph 3.

HODGES